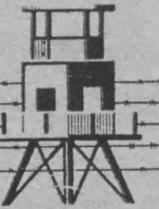


P.O.W. WOW



INTERNMENT CAMP · MEDICINE HAT · ALBERTA

VOL. 2, NO. 9.

Published under authority of Col. T. E. Snow, D.O.C., M.D. 13.
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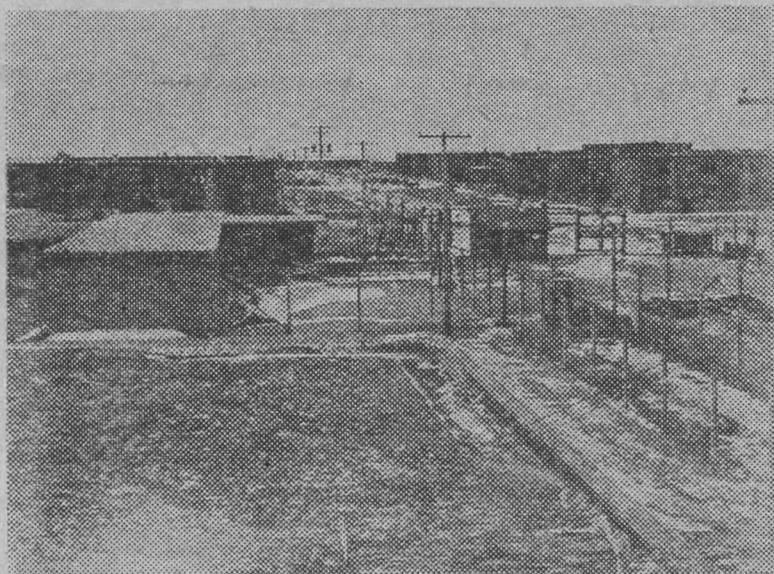
THAT'S ALL, CHUM!

MEDICINE HAT I.C. NO. 132 SEES EVENTFUL THREE YEARS SERVICE

Three years ago the PW barracks at Medicine were nearing completion. The double fence of high barbed wire was nearly completed and a start had been made on the foundations for the administration buildings. As

rest, to do chores in the new camp at Medicine Hat. As the Coy's quarters were not yet built, they had to live inside the wire in one of the PW barracks.

Two or three weeks later No. 27 Coy arrived and also moved



usual the work was started in the late fall. Quartered in the old Armouries downtown, Col. Bull and his staff were busy with details and anxiously awaiting the day when they could move into camp. But it had been a cold hard winter and the work progressed slowly. Then to further delay the job, one of the six large PW kitchens caught fire and burned to the ground. The buildings were, of course, still in the hands of the contractors.

25 COY FIRST

About the third week in March 1943 the first V.G. Company arrived—No. 25 Coy. They had spent the summer, fall and winter at Ozada and Lethbridge and were now rushed back from the sunshine of Vancouver, minus one week of their hard-earned

into PW quarters inside the wire. By this time the season of the year that is known as Spring had arrived. Actually there is no such season in the Medicine Hat area. Winter, very reluctantly and fighting every inch of the way, makes way for summer, and a few days after the last snow and mud has gone, hot days and dust storms are there. And was there mud! The inside of the enclosure reminded them of the Somme, with water hydrants in the place of pill boxes. So the authorities thought this was a good time to commence digging trenches under the PW barrack blocks—which they did.

23RD COY ARRIVES

Then another V.G.C. Coy arrived—the "Shiny 23rd." They

♦ Imminent Closing of No. 132 I.C. Spells "Kaput" to "P.O.W. WOW!"

You've had it, dear reader of P.O.W. WOW. This is the last issue. With Internment Camp life, P.O.W. WOW's activities are drawing to a close. On the 16th of October last year, the first printed copy rolled off the presses. A rebirth had taken place from a mimeographed sheet into a professional printed publication. Since that time this Internment Camp paper has come out in nine different issues.

P.O.W. WOW has not been a large paper; its circulation has been approximately that of the average small-town newspaper. In the four short months of its existence, however, its circulation doubled from one to two thousand copies per issue. What it has lacked in numbers has been compensated for by its

had come direct from Ottawa and were obviously on a secret mission, or a Cook's tour. For they did not toil nor spin. Not for them the plebeian pick and shovel—they had a Pipe Band. May 24th found them in Camp, so they journeyed to town and marched, and counter-marched for the delight of the citizens of Medicine Hat, and then departed for the balmy breezes of the Pacific coast. It was rumored that they had been heavily engaged in the battle of Gravenhurst and were battle-weary. Naturally the engagement at Gravenhurst took precedence over the hardships of the Ozada campaign as it was so much closer to Ottawa.

The first batch of about 2,000 PW arrived from the Lethbridge Camp which had been full to capacity all winter. Special trains with No. 25 Coy as train escort brought them into Camp. There has always been a friendly spirit of rivalry existing between the two Camps—Lethbridge and Medicine Hat—both of which are very similar in construction. It was therefore to be expected that Lethbridge would see to it that of the PW transferred to Medicine Hat, there would be

(Continued on page 3)

range. P.O.W. WOW readers may be found in every province of Canada with a light sprinkling in the United States, England, Scotland, Ireland and South Africa. Soldiers on occupation duty in Germany and Holland while away their leisure hours reading of thrilling escapes of German PW from some camp in Canada. Up in the wild forests of Northern Ontario, guards at PW work projects have found it interesting to read of camps and events which they knew by personal experience. Throughout Canada, particularly in the West, the memories of discharged members of the Veterans' Guard of Canada have been pleasantly refreshed. Yes, P.O.W. WOW has served a purpose: some seventy letters from readers across the Dominion bear witness to that. Further, articles appearing the magazine have been deemed of sufficient interest to merit their being reprinted in several large dailies and on one occasion broadcast over a large Calgary radio station during a noon news bulletin.

Yes, P.O.W. WOW has served a purpose, but it has cost money—approximately \$100 per month. Our income has come from three sources: 63% from local advertisers, 31% from the treasures of the various messes at Medicine Hat Internment Camp, and the remaining 6% from individual subscriptions. To all these contributors, a cheerful 'Thank You.' Our only regret is that the exigencies of the service have not permitted us to keep up publication, as we had hoped, to the end of June.

P.O.W. WOW

"The little paper with readers from Halifax to Victoria"

(Published every second week at Medicine Hat.)

EDITORIAL STAFF

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Secretary S/Sgt. R. Burkholder

Sub-editors:
36 Coy. V.G.C. Cpl. B. R. Wright
Headquarters Lt. A. G. Bruyns
R.C.A.M.C. Cpl. L. G. Barrett

"Au Revoir"

"Full many a flower was born
to blush unseen
And taste its sweetness on the
desert air."

This is our last and final issue. By the time these words are read this Camp will be in process of closing down. "Reduced to Nil Strength" as army phraseology terms it. Our little paper which has, we hope, interested and amused a few thousand Veterans, and which has tried to tell some of the story of the Veterans Guard of Canada, is now signing off.

It has been fun writing articles for P.O.W. WOW. It has been a great pleasure to receive so many messages of appreciation from other PW Camps and individual V.G. Companies. Though we have not made so much as a ripple on the immense sea of journalism, yet we filled a special niche of our own and take pride in our achievement.

From the inception of this Camp paper it was the policy to try and tell the story of what the Veterans Guard of Canada had done in the Second World War. It was also the considered policy of the paper to bring before responsible people the anomalies that exist presently in the allocation of benefits provided to ex-servicemen under the D.V.A. and particularly how the Veteran of Two Wars is discriminated against.

During the brief period this paper has been published, copies of almost every issue have been mailed to every leading daily paper in Western Canada and in addition to a number of highly placed people in Parliament, whom it was thought might be influenced. After this issue our voice will be stilled, but in another portion of P.O.W. WOW will be found an article dealing with the formation in Calgary of an "Association of the Veterans of Two Wars."

We strongly urge every Veteran of two wars to join this Association and also to form branches in every centre where there are enough "Old Vets" to form a group. Only by concert-

ed action and constant pressure can we hope to get a fair apportionment of the benefits which a generous country has provided for ex-servicemen. For remember, we are not asking charity, nor special privilege, but merely that benefits provided for all ex-servicemen by a grateful country and which are denied us on account of age, shall be made available to us in another form.

This fair apportionment of benefits to veterans of 50-60 years of age, with, in many cases, over ten years' faithful service in two wars, can only take the form of a pension, and a pension sufficient to keep them and their families in comfort and decency and certainly free from any "means test." When a lad of 18-19 serving on a Canadian warship for a few years, in the sheltered waters of the St. Lawrence River, or the equally sheltered waters of the Pacific coast, can become entitled to benefits worth \$5,000 to \$6,000, while a veteran of two wars with probably three years' front-line service in the first and five years' service in the second war, is only eligible on account of age to maximum benefits of approximately \$500, there is something "rotten in the State of Denmark." It surely was not the country's intention that such an anomalous situation should exist. Only united action by all veterans of two wars, only by constant pressure on your member of Parliament, by constant letters to the press, by constant meetings to air your grievances, will this present misinterpretation of your country's wishes be changed. For bureaucracy is a stubborn ox and a scheme once drawn up is not easily changed. Nor can you expect much help from the ex-servicemen's organizations. They are too busy looking after the "young" veteran.

So it's up to you. Join the Association of Veterans of Two Wars. If there isn't one in your locality, form one and tie it in with the Association at Calgary, and become clear in your mind what you are fighting for. Not something additional to what other servicemen are getting, not a dole, not a hand-out for laziness, but something your country intended you to have, and which is only denied you

STAND EASY!

You've had it. For some the next order will be "All aboard" and for others it will be "Stand by" for further orders. Whichever it is, the work will have to be carried on without the aid of this column. This final issue of the P.O.W. WOW should be filed away carefully in the flap of your suitcase. In years to come it will have priceless value both on sentimental and commercial standards.

* * *

On stormy nights, the little ones will crowd round the fire-side and cry, "Grandpapa, tell us about the time you guarded the P.O.W.'s!"

Then we will dig up the old P.O.W. WOW's and show them the pictures of Ozada and Medicine Hat camps. We will describe how we rushed in and personally cut down fifteen or twenty near-corpse from scaffolds after slapping down half-a-dozen of Rommel's Desert Rats. Yes, sir! About the time we got pushed out of the beer parlor—we will say nothing, however. That was a strategic withdrawal.

* * *

There's no justice. The other morning the radio credited Lethbridge with one of our best murders. Only by constant vigilance can the truth be maintained. Medicine Hat, and its ancestral Ozada, hold the trophy for the

because of age and infirmities. The Government have a clear-cut duty as follows:

(a) To provide a Veteran of Two Wars with a Government job, at a decent wage, that comes within the compass of his years and infirmities, with a proper pension to follow as soon as he can no longer work, or—

(b) If the Veteran is medically certified as being unable to work, or such a job as in "A" above cannot be furnished, then he automatically becomes entitled to a pension.

To any clear-minded person it is quite obvious that a Veteran of Two Wars over 50 years of age has a mighty small chance of securing employment in a civilian occupation, especially when it is a well known fact that a great number of them are suffering from disabilities resulting from hardships received in both wars. In fact, it is this very reason that makes them ineligible for benefits under a number of clauses in the D.V.A.

So let your voice be heard. You have wives and children, relatives and friends—altogether a lot of votes. Get together and use them.

Good-bye.

The Fourth Column

Editor, P.O.W. WOW:

"... As a newspaperman with some 15 years experience, I would like to congratulate your editorial staff on the professional touch you have managed to give your paper. While you are somewhat restricted by the size of your paper, your layout is particularly good. . . ."

Capt. J.G.D., Ottawa, Ont.

most sensational, toughest and best run camp on the list. The guards and the scouts who have never served at Medicine Hat will be explaining to their relatives, "Well, it was just the breaks. Everyone couldn't work at Medicine Hat! I wanted to there."

* * *

One story of the Vets that has never been published, awaits a more suitable occasion. The story of the vets at British Guiana. To tell it properly would take a lot of space. Yet it could be told in a sentence. There was a period in the dark years of the war effort when a small handful of Canadian Vet Guards were given a task, under tropical skies, upon whose successful accomplishment depended the turning of the tide of war. Failure in that task would have meant the loss of all supremacy when its gain was most vital to civilization. Some day you will have a chance to read the story. Some of those who played a part in it are in Medicine Hat. In other words, they have seen practically everything now.

* * *

In 1941 we sat up nights estimating the contracts that would be needed to feed the expected 14,000 P.O.W.'s who would come to the Hat. Their arrival was expected immediately. They came in 1943. We now sit up nights estimating when they will be gone and when no contracts will be needed. Once more we have had postponements, but the end is very near and the P.O.W. WOW (which was never in our estimates of those days) must take a bow and withdraw.

Terminal Cafe

Medicine Hat, Alta.

GEO. FISHER, Mgr.

Hockey Banquet At Cos Hotel

"Never have I seen a hockey match so lopsided in which the losing team did not show any evidence of temper or disgust"—these were the words of the Commandant, Lt.-Col. W. Minard, addressed to member of Internment Camp Lions hockey team meeting at the Cos Hotel last Thursday. This remark was made in reference to the 18-5 trouncing at the hands of Suffield Army in M.D. No. 13 play-downs. The Commandant spoke highly of the team's fighting spirit and good sportsmanship. Capt. "Torchy" Hilliker spoke briefly in introducing Col. Minard and in thanking the various team officials for their co-operation.

Silver Spoon Winners

Capt. L. Edmunds RCAMC and Pte. Owen of the Scouts were the winners of silver spoons in the regular competition of the Rifle Club. Edmunds scored 499 out of a possible 500. . . . A team of shots from 26 Coy were defeated by the 'Hat' Rifle and Revolver Club by a score of 1399 to 1387. . . . Capt. Hilliker, Sports Officer, recently announced a new award, the so-called "Golden Bullet" which may be won with five possibles from the prone position, ten over 98 from the sitting position, and ten over 90 standing.

TWO-WAR VETS MEET AT CAMP

With the Camp Commandant, Lt.-Col. W. B. B. Minard, in the chair, a well attended meeting of "Old Vets" took place in the Camp Recreation Hall on Tuesday 4 Feb 46, for the purpose of hearing about the Association of Veterans of Two Great Wars which had recently been formed in Calgary. Another enthusiastic meeting took place on Thursday 16 Feb 46, and as a result 215 members with subscriptions towards the Association of \$430 have signed up in Camp at date of writing. The membership fee is \$2.00 per member which is solely for defraying expenses of office, typing, mailing, etc.

It is hoped that this Association will spread across Canada, for it is high time that the problems of re-establishment peculiar to the "Old Vets" who have fought in both wars, were handled by an organization which is not only thoroughly acquainted with them but entirely sympathetic to them. There is no implied criticism of the Canadian Legion, or any other Veterans' organization, in the above statement. It is simply that, together with the Government, Veterans' organizations and the Canadian Legion particularly, have evolved a rehabilitation programme which, excellent as it is, does not provide for the Veteran of 50-60 years of age who has fought in two wars.

It is therefore hoped that the movement, originated in Calgary, will grow quickly and soon become large enough to have its voice heard at Ottawa.

The following officers have been elected to run the Association at Calgary:

President A. J. E. Gibson
Sec.-Treas. J. Claugton
Address Moose Hall, Calgary

Either of the above will be glad to hear from anyone wishing to form branches elsewhere.

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none that they would really miss. In fact, if there was a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi left in Lethbridge after the move, he must have been in hospital.

12,000 PRISONERS

In the middle of July 43 a further batch of PW arrived from Monteith, bringing the Camp strength up to around 5,000 at which point it stayed until after "D" day, when another 7,000 were received from Normandy and a number sent from Medicine Hat to Neys and Lethbridge. In one day six special trains arrived and two were despatched. This, it is believed, constitutes a record for any internment camp in Canada. In October a further 2,500 PW arrived from Europe and for a time the camp strength was well over 12,000.

PLASZEK MURDER

Once the PW were in the Camp, life settled down to a more or less dull routine, interrupted now and then by a riot, and on 14 July 43 by the murder of PW Plaszek by his own comrades. Nearly three years after the event, the accused murderers are being brought to trial and the R.C.M.P. deserve a lot of credit for their untiring efforts in tracing them down and bringing them to justice in spite of the terror of the Gestapo. Nearly a year later in Sep 1944 another foul murder was committed by agents of the Gestapo in the Camp. This also is in the hands of the R.C.M.P. and there is no doubt that these murderers also will be brought to justice before very long.

GOLDEN VALLEY FARM

Early in 1944 permission was received to go ahead with a large farm project, both with the idea of providing food for the Camp and at the same time finding work for a number of PW who would otherwise be unoccupied. The Golden Valley farm on the South Saskatchewan River was leased and steps were taken immediately to get it into production. The farm consisted of about 350 acres of partly irrigated land, not all of which was broken. The venture proved very successful and both in 1944 and 1945 a large profit was made and a tremendous tonnage of potatoes, beets, parsnips and other vegetables were made available for use in M.D. 13 establishments. All the work was done by the PW who were paid at the current rate of 20c per day.

4½ TONS BREAD DAILY

Apropos of the farm and feeding of PW it may interest some

of our readers to know the approximate amount of food stuffs required to maintain a camp of 12,000 PW, three V.G.C. Cos each 250 strong, and Headquarters staff including Scouts, Drivers, Clerical Staff, etc. The following is an approximate table of daily consumption of some food stuffs:

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Beef or alternatives | 4½ tons |
| Bread | 5 " |
| Potatoes | 5 " |
| Other vegetables | 3 " |
| Milk | 7 " |
| Butter | 1 " |

In addition, the PW canteen, allowed prisoners under the terms of the Geneva Convention, did a monthly business of around \$30,000. From the foregoing you will easily see that running a large PW camp is not exactly small business.

V-E DAY IN ENCLOSURE

V-E day was a highlight in the camp history. Until then all PW were still nationals of Germany; Switzerland looked after their interests by periodic visits of the Swiss Consul. On V-E day the German government ceased to exist: a proclamation had to be read to them which outlined their changed status. It was arranged that this proclamation should be read to all PW assembled in the big sports stadium which they had built on their sports ground. It turned out to be quite an impressive ceremony, for the German loves military display. Although the occasion marked the "depths of humiliation" for the German people, the Camp leaders spared no effort to insure its impressiveness.

Each block formed up and marched in perfect discipline to the stadium where they filed into the tiers of seats marked off for them. Then the block leaders brought them to attention and advancing to the centre of the stadium reported his "block" to the Assistant Camp Leader. While this was going on, the PW band was marching up and down playing martial airs. With perfect timing and the utmost military precision each block, numbering about 1,500 men, took up its appointed place until the tiers of seats were full of standing PW. Two minutes before the appointed hour the Camp Commandant's car, flying his pennant, drove up and escorted by several officers of the Camp staff, he ascended the dias where a loudspeaker had been placed. Instantly the Camp Leader called "Achtung" (Attention) and every man of the 10,000 assembled came to attention and stood perfectly still. The Camp Leader saluted, the (Continued on page 4)

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British Role In Burma

The war in Burma so successfully brought to a conclusion by the forces operating under Lord Louis Mountbatten in 1945 has never received the publicity it deserved, either in Canada or in the U.S.A. Neither the strategical importance of these operations in the overall world picture of the war against the Axis, and particularly against Japan, nor the tremendous effort made by Britain in a theatre so remote from the main war zone, has been as yet properly presented to the public in this country. Further, the Burma war was the first war of any magnitude ever fought where lines of communication were solely serviced by the Air Force, even down to the troops' mail and beer, and where whole divisions complete with mules and mountain artillery were carried by air behind the enemies lines, left on their own, and subsequently serviced and their wounded evacuated by air. It was one of the most brilliantly conceived and brilliantly carried out campaigns of the whole war.

LARGELY BRITISH

Now in many parts of the U.S.A., by reason of the publicity given to the U.S. operations on the Ledo road under General Stillwell, it is more or less taken for granted that the main effort in Burma was conducted by U.S. formations. The following statistics compiled from information supplied by the Official Information Services of the United Kingdom through their Ottawa Office may therefore be of considerable interest to our readers:

Total forces employed on Allied: approximately one million men, nearly all from Britain and the British Empire. They comprised two distinct forces operating in two different theatres under:

Northern Area Combat Command, commanded by Lt.-Gen. Daniel I. Sultan, U.S. Army; three Chinese divisions, trained by U.S., the 36th British Division (Old Country troops), and the U.S. "Mars" force comprising 1½ Brigades (approx. 3,500).

The Fourteenth Army, commanded first by Lt.-Gen. Slim, and then by Lt.-Gen. Leese after the fall of Rangoon: five British divisions (all line and county troops), six Indian divisions (all Senior Officers British), two West African divisions (all Officers and N.C.O.'s British), one East African division (all Officers and N.C.O.'s British).

In addition, at the beginning of the campaign the 15th Corps under command of Maj.-Gen.

Messcovy, which comprised two Indian and one West African division formed the South West Command and completely whipped the Japs in the Arakan campaign. For statistical purposes they are included in the 14th Army which they joined after the Arakan fighting.

In addition to the Army Groups listed above the following troops were also employed: British Commandos (several thousands), British Armoured Formations (at least two divisions), British and Indian Paratroops.

The Air Force which played a very important part in the operation was comprised as follows: (a) Combat Corps Task Force (55 per cent RAF and 45 per cent RCAF); (b) Strategic Air Force (55 per cent RAF and 45 per cent USAAAF); (c) 10th USAA Force (all U.S., mostly transport); (d) 3rd Tactical Air Force (all RAF—fighters); (e) Air Commandos (two USAAF units); (f) Coastal Recce and Air-Sea Reserve Force (all RAF); (g) Allies Fleet Air Arm (mostly British).

HEAVY CASUALTIES

The results of this campaign were the total destruction of the Japanese 15th, 28th and 33rd Armies. Nearly 150,000 Japanese dead were actually counted and how many thousands more are rotting corpses in the dense jungle no one will ever know. Their total casualties in killed and wounded were over half a million. Needless to say our casualties were not light and some British divisions who had fought in the retreat from Rangoon and Mandalay and then again in the offensive which recaptured those historic places had nearly 100 per cent casualties. The 14th Army alone in the first six months of 1944 had 85 per cent of its combat strength (237,000) hospitalized. But the RAMC got most of them back to duty in a period of three weeks.

The battle line was, next to Russia, the longest in the world. The fighting occurred in a country where mountain ranges running up to 18,000 feet had to be crossed, where the rainfall is 100 to 125 inches a year, and where every known tropical disease flourishes.

But we of British stock can take pride in this. The fighting clearly proved that the British Tommy from the back streets of Glasgow and London was more than the equal of his weight in Japs and that, properly trained and led, he was a first class jungle fighter. Many of these men fought for four years in the

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Camp Commandant asked him to stand his men "at ease" and proceeded to read the proclamation, which told them they had lost the war and all power was now in the hands of the Allies. Immediately after he had finished, an interpreter read the proclamation in German. The parade was again brought to attention, salutes were exchanged, and the Commandant left in his car. It was a splendid example of German military discipline: and although many were seen afterwards weeping and obviously distraught with the bitters news they had heard, they certainly behaved like soldiers while the proclamation was read to them. It was an impressive spectacle and will long be remembered by those who were privileged to witness it, as many thousands of them were dressed in their uniforms in Army, Navy and Airforce as the case might be, and the parade symbolized the end of German might.

RETURN OF PW

Now we are busy moving them back to Europe. Fifteen hundred were shipped in three special trains on Sunday 10 Feb 46 and sailed on the Mauretania. As most train traffic moves at night through Medicine Hat, the hours for departure were 0130, 0315 and 0500 hours. A foot of snow was on the ground, the temperature was not many degrees above zero and the enclosure is almost half a mile from the camp railway spur. Also only one train at a time can come on the spur, a single track about two miles long entirely devoid of lights. Nevertheless, each train was loaded and ready to leave three quarters of an hour ahead of due departure time, which fact

fever ridden country with their only leave a few days in Calcutta. Old Country regiments like the Buffs, the K.O.Y.L.I., the Lances and other county regiments, plus the Scottish regiments who are always where the fighting is dirtiest, added more laurels to their illustrious records.

The Burma campaign was one of which we can be proud and would have had a great effect on subsequent operations, had not the atomic bomb caused Japan's capitulation.

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THE LAST STRAW

For some weeks back in 1942 the radio announcer had been calling on all people to conserve electricity. Upon one of his inspections the Commandant noticed several electric toasters and other appliances in the enclosure where the behaviour of the PWs had deprived them of all privileges. Here was another privilege to stop and all electrical appliances were ordered out of the enclosure.

It was a bright winter morning when the PW came to protest to the Commandant. It had been a busy period and the Commandant had been in his office long before sunrise. Over his head his light was still shining while he explained the meaning of the ancient adage of the last straw that broke the camel's back, and told how the little bit of electricity saved might help to make the last bullet that would end the war.

With a most polite smile on his arrogant face and stretching his long arm to the switch, the PW asked, "May I be permitted to save that little bit of electricity?"

speaks well for the Camp organization and the different departments concerned.

In a few weeks the remainder will go and what has been a busy bustling place will be left to the gophers, cactus and rattlesnakes. Almost all the Western companies of the V.G.C. have done one or more tours of duty in the Camp and now many of them are going overseas as escorts to the PW. A big gap will be left in the city's business and social life. A large investment in buildings etc will become War Assets. C'est le guerre.

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